Landscape Character Areas of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
The North Downs: The Hog’s Back and Puttenham Vale

Comprising a series of low sandy hills, the Puttenham Vale forms a narrow, enclosed pastoral valley with medium sized fields, thick hedges, woodland, winding lanes and attractive scattered villages. The area is dominated by the spectacular Hog’s Back ridge with small irregular sized fields divided by hedgerows and woodland. The dip slope has a more open and regular field pattern supporting extensive arable farming. The tree-lined Hog’s Back forms a dramatic backdrop to views from an extensive area and affords expansive views out over Surrey’s countryside.

The key local AONB features identified

- Dramatic views of Hog’s Back ridge from wide area, and extensive views northwards from Hog’s Back (eg. Guildford Cathedral and London)
- Historic parkland with wealth of features (eg. Loseley Park)
- Attractive villages with traditional cottages, houses and scattered farmsteads (eg. Seale, Puttenham, Compton, Artington)
- Local landmark buildings and fine churches (eg. Watts Gallery, Watts Memorial Chapel, Loseley House, Greyfriars House, Puttenham church, Compton church)
- Large open arable fields on dip slope and smaller irregular fields with hedges on scarp slope (Hog’s Back)
- Species rich semi-ancient natural woodland, shaws and hedgerows
- Pastoral farmland with scattered farms, square (Parliamentary enclosures) and irregular shaped fields with dense hedgerows (Puttenham Vale).

The key local AONB issues identified

- Impact of traffic on narrow lanes and in villages
- Impact of urban fringe and suburban pressures
- Decline in quality of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Impact of mineral extraction and landfill
- Decline in quality of woodland and loss of beech trees and beech woodland
The North Downs: Ranmore and Hackhurst Downs

Ranmore and Hackhurst Downs is a densely wooded and sparsely settled area of rolling downland characterised by a gently undulating dip slope with far reaching views towards London. The south facing wooded scarp slope overlooks the delightful Pippbrook and Tillingbourne valleys providing dramatic views of the wooded Greensand Hills. The area has an isolated, wild feel, with pockets of farmland clearings contained within a mosaic of woodland, shaws, hedgerows and commercial forestry. Enclosed dry valleys on the dip slope and areas of common and heathland, largely colonised by trees, together with winding, enclosed lanes, boundary banks and scattered farmsteads, are also distinctive features of the area.

The key local AONB features identified

- Extensive semi-natural ancient and secondary woodland (including the North Downs Way)
- Extensive network of footpaths, winding lanes and tracks (eg. The North Downs Way National Trail)
- Extensive tracts of open downland and species rich grassland (eg. at Merrow, Hackhurst, Albury and White Downs)
- Historic parkland and post-medieval estates (eg. Polesden Lacey and Clandon Estate)
- Expansive views of open landscape from key viewpoints (eg. Newlands Corner, Albury Downs and Hackhurst)
- Narrow, sunken, enclosed winding lanes with species rich hedgerows, drove ways and hollow ways.

The key local AONB issues identified

- Impact of traffic on narrow lanes
- Decline in open downland and species rich grassland
- Loss of views and viewpoints along scarp slope
- Decline in quality and use of woodland
- Decline in quality of shaws, hedges and hedgerow trees
- Impact of urban fringe and suburban pressures on rural environment
The North Downs: The Mole Gap

The Mole Gap has great natural beauty. The passage of the River Mole through the North Downs has created a truly dramatic landscape and one of the most popular visitor destinations in the Surrey Hills. The winding, steep-sided valley has created natural amphitheatres within a beautiful setting of river, water meadows, woodland, parkland, farmland and attractive villages. The area is overlooked by Ranmore, Norbury Park and Box Hill, with its steep, partly exposed chalk cliffs.

The key local AONB features identified
- Densely wooded valleys particularly juniper, yew and box woodland (eg. Box Hill, Givons Grove, Juniper Hill)
- Steep sided cliffs overlooking the valley, and high points commanding spectacular views (Box Hill, Norbury Park, Mickleham Downs)
- Narrow, winding, enclosed lanes with hedgerow and wooded boundaries (eg. Headley Lane, Chapel Lane)
- Meandering River Mole, with riparian trees, water meadows, bridges and stepping stones
- Rich cultural heritage of writers and artists (eg. Daniel Defoe, Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, George Meredith, John Skelton, Robert Louis Stevenson)
- Regular field pattern of rolling pasture with bushy hedgerows (in valley), but smaller field units near Headley.

The key local AONB issues identified
- Impact of traffic on narrow lanes and in villages
- Decline in quality of hedgerows
- Impact of urban fringe pressures
- Impact of visitors on facilities and landscape
- Decline in quality of parkland, parkland features and historic features
- Lack of awareness about historic and cultural associations
The North Downs: Scarp and Holmesdale

The prominent scarp slope of the North Downs provides a dramatic and dominant feature overlooking the farmed landscape of the Holmesdale Valley and wooded Greensand Hills to the south. The scarp comprises a rich mosaic of pasture, ploughed land, downland, woodland and scrub. The north facing dip slope is an open, undulating, large scale landscape, with wooded shaws, pasture, large arable fields, parkland, scattered small settlements, isolated farmsteads and narrow lanes. In contrast, the Holmesdale Valley is more densely settled with major road corridors, extensive industry and an agricultural landscape of mixed farming and dense hedges.

The key local AONB features identified

- Extensive species rich ancient semi-natural woodland, beech woodland, shaws and coppice
- Tracts of open downland, heathland, wood pasture and commons (eg. Limpsfield Chart, Headley Heath, Banstead Heath, Walton Heath)
- Historic parkland, estates and parkland features (eg. Marden Park, Gatton Park, Titsey Estate, Betchworth Park)
- Far reaching, expansive views from scarp viewpoints across Greensand Hills and Weald (eg. Gravelley Hill, Colley Hill, Box Hill)
- Major road corridors (eg. M23, M25, A22, A25, A217), but also network of narrow, winding, enclosed lanes
- Field patterns from large-scale arable (east) to small scale pasture with boundaries of woodland, shaws and hedgerows (west)
- Recreational access via tracks and drove ways (eg. North Downs Way) and attractions (eg. Box Hill, Colley Hill, Gatton Park, Headley Heath, Epsom Downs).

The key local AONB issues identified

- Impact of traffic on narrow and sunken lanes
- Impact of the M23, M25, A22, A25 and A217 corridors
- Impact of urban fringe and suburban pressures
- Decline in open downland, heathland and common
- Fragmentation of farmland and increased horse grazing
- Decline in quality of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Impact of mineral extraction and landfill
Greensand Valley: The Upper Wey

The Upper Wey is a very attractive river valley with steep sided wooded slopes and an open flat valley of pasture and open water meadows set within a mosaic of hedgerows. Extremely popular with visitors, the area is a small-scale intimate landscape with a relatively secluded feel. It has distinctive bridges, picturesque villages and a wealth of historic and cultural interest. This diverse landscape is rich in wildlife.

The key local AONB features identified
- Extensive areas of species rich semi-ancient natural woodland
- Areas of heathy common form boundaries of parishes (eg. Frensham, Tilford, Elstead, Witley and Crooksbury Commons)
- Picturesque nucleated villages located at historic bridge crossing and fording points (eg. Tilford, Elstead, Milford and Eashing)
- Open meadows and pastures with species rich hedgerows
- Historic water meadows with sluices, weirs and ditches, and wetlands of nature conservation importance (eg. Thundry Meadows and Lammas Lands)

The key local AONB issues identified
- Decline in quality of woodland
- Decline in quality of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Decline in quality of coppice woodland
- Impact of urban fringe and suburban pressures on rural environment
- Decline in quality of pasture
- Lack of awareness about local historic and cultural associations
Greensand Valley: Pippbrook and Tillingbourne

Located between the high ground of the North Downs and Leith Hill Greensand, this is a delightful and highly attractive secluded valley landscape of mixed farming within a wooded setting. The landscape has a rich mosaic of fields, woods, country estates, streams, ponds, villages, parkland, hills, churches and scenic roads. It also has a wealth of cultural and historic interest and is a popular visitor destination.

The key local AONB features identified
- Tillingbourne stream with rich industrial past (eg. corn milling, iron working, fulling, tanning, weaving, flax, paper making, and gunpowder)
- Landmark buildings in the landscape (eg. Wotton Church, St Martha’s Church, Shalford Mill, Albury’s chimneys and Apostolic Church, Abinger Hammer clock)
- Picturesque, secluded hamlets and villages, and linear settlement spread along valley (eg. Friday Street, Abinger Hammer, Gomshall, Shere, Albury, Chilworth)
- Spectacular viewpoints (eg. St Martha’s Hill) and framed views from road corridors and valley
- Small wooded hills with blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland and coppice (eg. Deerleap Wood and The Chantries)
- Scenic road corridors (eg. A25 and A248) and network of narrow winding lanes and tracks, some sunken (eg. Coast Hill on A25).

The key local AONB issues identified
- Impact of traffic on narrow lanes and villages
- Impact of urban fringe and suburban pressures on rural environment
- Decline in quality of woodland and coppice
- Decline in quality of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Impact of visitor pressures on villages and countryside access, particularly in Greensand Hills
- Lack of awareness about historic and cultural associations
- Decline in quality of parkland, parkland features and historic features
Greensand Plateau: Shackleford

The area around Shackleford is a gently sloping and undulating plateau with large areas of open rolling farmed landscape. It is dominated by the high points of Crooksbury Hill and Puttenham Common, and the A3 corridor. Key features of significance include dense woodland plantations, small valleys, expansive heathy commons, historic parkland and distinctive architecture designed in the Surrey Arts and Crafts Style.

The key local AONB features identified

- Network of narrow lanes and roads with tree and hedgerow boundaries
- Densely settled, with well screened distinctive hamlets and villages (eg. Shackleford and Seale)
- Historic parkland with mature trees, oak pollards, pasture, lakes and ponds (eg. Hampton Estate and Peper Harow)
- Expansive tracts of open heathland and wooded common (eg. Puttenham Common)
- Overall wooded appearance and large tracts of conifer plantations (eg. Crooksbury Common)
- Large scale arable-farmed landscape, but also smaller units within cleared woodland.

The key local AONB issues identified

- Impact of the A3 corridor
- Impact of traffic on narrow and sunken lanes
- Decline in quality of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Fragmentation of farmland and increased horse grazing
- Impact of conifer planting on wildlife conservation
Greensand Plateau: Witley and Churt

The Witley and Churt area is an undulating wooded plateau bisected by small intimate, enclosed valleys of the Upper Wey and punctuated by locally occurring hillocks. The area has large expanses of open heathland and common, conifer plantations, pockets of farmland and scattered settlement. A key feature of the area is its expansive patchwork of commons, each with its own distinctive characteristics. The charm of the area lies in its relative wildness and tranquility, which has attracted generations of visitors.

The key local AONB features identified

- Extensive open heathland and common with high ecological value (eg. Frensham, Hankley, Thursley, Witley and Ockley)
- Scattered settlements with pretty brick, stone and tile hung cottages and greens
- Small-scale pastoral farming landscape with irregular field pattern within woodland and hedges (eg. Churt and Witley)
- Major recreational and visitor attractions (eg. Frensham Ponds and Thursley Common)
- Bronze Age burial mounds and ancient drove ways within heathland and common areas
- Industrial past of glass making and iron working with remnant features such as hammer ponds, leats, weirs (eg. Thursley).

The key local AONB issues identified

- Impact of traffic on narrow and sunken lanes
- Decline in open heathland and common
- Impact of visitor pressures on habitat and landscape
- Impact of conifer planting on wildlife conservation
- Decline in quality of coppice woodland
- Lack of awareness about habitat management and designations
Greensand Hills: Hindhead

Hindhead is a topographical wonder comprising a complex knot of twisting V-shaped valleys and steep hills. The area offers some of the highest, wildest and most dramatic scenery in the Surrey Hills. There are extensive broadleaf and conifer plantations, areas of open heathland and common, and pockets of enclosed farmland in the valley. Bisected by the busy A3 trunk road, the area, which is noted for its cultural and historical interest, remains a very popular visitor destination.

The key local AONB features identified

- The Devil’s Punch Bowl with its strong historical and cultural associations
- Extensive tracts of open heathland and commons (eg. Hindhead Common)
- Dramatic landscape of twisting wooded valleys and steep hills (eg. Gibbet Hill at 272m is the second highest point in Surrey)
- The town of Haslemere within its well-wooded ridge and valley setting
- Spectacular scenery with stunning localised views, particularly northwards (eg. Devil’s Punch Bowl and Gibbet Hill)
- Assarted farmland set within woodland, featuring small fields, valley meadows and pastures with thick hedges (eg. Highcombe Bottom).

The key local AONB issues identified

- Decline of open heathland and common
- Loss of views and viewpoints – southward and northward
- Urban fringe
- Visitor and recreational pressures
- Decline in quality of woodland, particularly species rich coppice
- Impact of the A3 corridor
Greensand Hills and Wooded Weald: Hascombe

The Hascombe countryside is an open rolling plateau with a pattern of rounded interlocking hills and steep sided valleys. It forms a large-scale landscape of pasture, wooded ridges and heaths. This secluded landscape has provided the inspiration and the setting for the Arts and Crafts Movement. The area has a pleasant rural atmosphere, concealing hidden villages and hamlets, with distinctive old cottages and Edwardian country houses, many constructed in local Bargate stone and tile hung.

The key local AONB features identified

- Dense broadleaved woods on ridges and hill spurs, enclosing pockets of pastoral farmland
- Dense hedgerows along network of roads, lanes, paths and tracks
- Narrow, winding, enclosed lanes, many of them 'sunken’ with high banks and exposed tree roots
- Scattered farmsteads, attractive hamlets and villages along valley road corridors (eg. Hambledon)
- Old cottages and period properties, many half timbered, with large gardens (eg. Winkworth Farm)
- Historic parkland, designed landscape and arboreta (eg. Winkworth Arboretum and Munstead Wood).

The key local AONB issues identified

- Impact of traffic on narrow and sunken lanes
- Loss and decline in quality of hedgerows, including replacement with fences
- Decline in quality of woodland and coppice
- Impact of ornamental species on integrity of woodland
- Loss of views and viewpoints
- Lack of awareness about historical and cultural associations
Greensand Hills: Leith Hill

The Leith Hill area comprises of a series of prominent wooded hills, divided by deep interlocking valleys. The topography of this part of the Greensand Hills creates a dominant and dramatic elevated landscape with commanding views over the Weald. The area retains an isolated feel and sense of wildness, with small settlements in secluded valleys, extensive woodland cover, small-scale agriculture in wooded clearings, distinctive architecture and a network of attractive lanes, many of them sunken.

The key local AONB features identified

- Panoramic views from scarp across Weald (eg. Leith Hill at 290 metres is highest point in the south east)
- Pockets of historically important heathland, common and heathy woodland (eg. Hurtwood, Leith Hill, Blackheath, Farley Heath)
- Extensive woodland cover and conifer plantations (eg. Winterfold Wood, Hurtwood, Wotton Common)
- Large houses, many Edwardian, with large gardens and woodland and also stone and tile hung cottages (eg. Peaslake)
- A network of enclosed, winding lanes, including distinctive sunken lanes with high banks and exposed tree roots
- Enclosed woods and species rich coppice (eg. Abinger and Wotton).

The key local AONB issues identified

- Loss and decline in quality of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and shaws
- Impact of traffic on narrow and sunken lanes
- Impact of visitors on landscape
- Decline in quality of woodland
- Loss of open heathland and common
- Loss of localised views and viewpoints
- Impact of conifer planting on wildlife
Wooded Weald: Chiddingfold

This is a low lying area of undulating, small scale, secluded, farmed landscape, comprising a patchwork quilt of small field units set within a mosaic of mature woodland, shaws and overgrown hedgerows. It is an area punctuated by steep sided wooded ghylls. The area has an important industrial and cultural heritage, having associations with glass making and iron working. It also boasts many fine examples of distinctive tile hung and half-timbered buildings.

The key local AONB features identified

- Species rich small coppice woods, mostly hazel but some composed of hornbeam, with oak standards (eg. past source of charcoal and faggots)
- Scattered settlement pattern of manorial farmsteads and hamlets, with roadside common, wastes and village greens
- Irregular field pattern (pasture) with boundaries formed by woodland, shaws and tall hedgerows
- Large number of ponds, including many old hammer ponds, with dams and bays, and other watercourses (eg. Furnace Place and Kiln Copse)
- Extensive areas of species rich semi-ancient natural woodland and commercial plantations
- Rich industrial heritage of glass making, iron working, wool and timber dating from 13th century (eg. Dunsfold and Chiddingfold).

The key local AONB issues identified

- Decline in quality of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Impact of horse pasture
- Impact of conifer planting on open landscape and wildlife
- Loss and decline in quality of ponds and other water courses
- Decline in quality of woodland, particularly coppice
- Deterioration of distinctive ghyll woodlands and shaws
Wooded Weald: Wonersh to Holmwood

Stretching from Holmwood Common in the east to Wonersh in the west, this is a low lying area of gently undulating farmland rising up to join the Greensand ridge. The area comprises a small-scale irregular field pattern, largely pastoral, within a well-defined woodland setting. The area has an intimate, secluded feel with a scattering of villages and hamlets, greens and commons, and a network of narrow, winding, enclosed lanes with mature hedgerow oak trees. Other features in the area include localised framed views of the Greensand escarpment, unique wooded ghylls, large country houses with parkland, and distinctive styles of buildings, especially cottages and farmhouses.

The key local AONB features identified

- Attractive glimpsed views of Leith Hill and Greensand escarpment from various roadside and footpath locations
- Network of narrow, winding, enclosed lanes, often with dense tall hedgerows and hedge banks
- Traditional building style which incorporates local brick, hung tiles, half-timbering and slate roofs
- Species rich ancient woodland, small coppice woods, copses, shaws and hedgerows, dominated by oak
- Scattered settlement pattern of hamlets and villages alongside roads, with large greens, commons and roadside wastes (eg. Ockley and Forest Green)
- Irregular intricate field pattern with boundaries formed by woodland, shaws and tall hedgerows.

The key local AONB issues identified

- Impact of traffic on narrow lanes
- Impact of telecommunication masts and fly tipping
- Decline in quality of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Decline of species rich coppice woodland and distinctive ghyll woodland
- Diminished quality of views and viewpoints to and from escarpment
- Impact of suburban influences and general development pressures